3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
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CHAPTER I

SUPERNATURAL BEINGS

Before beginning our description of Gros Ventre ritual observances, it seems desirable, in the interests of order and clarity, to give some account one by one of the various Gros Ventre supernatural beings. These beings may be divided for our purposes into three categories: first, those to whom cult in the form of prayer or sacrifice was offered; second, those to whom no cult proper is offered but who enter in one form or another into ritual or who are conceived as actually helpful or harmful to the living Gros Ventres of modern times; third, those to whom no cult is rendered, who do not enter into ritual at all, and who, while conceived as helpful or harmful to the Gros Ventres at some time in the remoter or archaic past, are not so and have not been so in more recent or modern times. Beings of our third category belong rather to the realm of folklore or traditional history than to that of religion and will be given only passing attention here.

The chief beings of our first category are: the Supreme Being, the storm being, the sun, the earth, the Four Holy Men, Broken Knife, He-who-starved-to-death, the Last Child, the water monster(s), Little Spirit, He-who-dreams-of-Bha'a, the ghost helpers, the beings who gave power, the petroglyph beings. We shall now take these up in order, giving for each their names, nature, attributes and functions. The rites connected with them will be described in later chapters.

The Supreme Being

The most-common name by which the Supreme Being was called or addressed was Ixtciboni:hohat (Above Ni:hohat).[1] The

[1] Cf. Kroeber, 1908, p. 275. In our transcription, a, e, i, o, u, have continental values: ä is flat as in English "bat"; ë is close to French "feu"; vowels are lengthened by a colon, as a:; ə is the unstressed indeterminate vowel; θ is th as in English "thing"; tc is a single sound as ch in English "church"; tc̓ is the same sound but glottalized and occurs only terminally; apostrophe indicates glottal stop.